

VZCZCXRO6346
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHNM #1346 3061002
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 021002Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3884
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHLMC/MCC WASHDC

UNCLAS NIAMEY 001346

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W DENNISON, AF/RSA HARPOLE AND AF/PDPA WHITMAN

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KCOR](#) [KPAO](#) [NG](#)
SUBJECT: GON Arrests Another Journalist

REF: (a) Niamey 876 (b) Niamey 1220 (c) Niamey 992

¶1. Ibrahim Manzo Diallo, director of biweekly Agadez-based newspaper Air Info, was arrested on October 9, 2007 in Niamey. He remained in custody without formal charges until October 31, 2007, when he was charged with conspiracy and transported to prison.

¶2. Diallo was arrested at Niamey's international airport as he attempted to leave Niger, and was transported to Agadez. Normally authorities must charge an individual within forty-eight hours of arrest (renewable once); however, Agadez is currently under a GON-declared state of alert, due to the ongoing MNJ insurrection in Northern Niger. [Comment: It is widely believed that Diallo was transported to Agadez to circumvent the forty-eight hour limit on detention without formal charges. End Comment.]

¶3. Diallo and his newspaper ran afoul of the GON in June 2007, when Air Info was suspended from publication for three months based on what the government considered "pro-MNJ" reporting on events in northern Niger (Ref a). Despite the suspension, Diallo began publishing a reconstituted version of the paper under the title Info d'Air. When the state of alert was declared on August 24, 2007, he fled Agadez citing fear of arrest.

¶4. On October 24, 2007 another journalist of Air Info, David Yacouba, was arrested. He was held without charges until November 1, 2007, when he was released. The media reports that the actual reason for Yacouba's arrest was his interview of a national legislative representative from Agadez, who was part of an unofficial delegation of legislators from the region, which met with the MNJ. The GON has refused to negotiate with the MNJ and has made no public statement about this meeting.

¶5. Radio Sarounia director and Radio France Internationale (RFI) correspondent Moussa Kaka remains in prison awaiting trial on charges of violating national security (Ref b), based on alleged collaboration with the MNJ. His lawyer Moussa Coulibaly, who also represents Diallo, maintains the evidence against Kaka, which consists of recorded telephone conversations between Kaka and MNJ members, was illegally obtained and is, therefore, inadmissible.

¶6. Comment: While the substance and legality of the evidence against Kaka is unknown, his lawyer has acknowledged seeing a transcript of the alleged conversations. However, there has been no similar evidence released against Diallo and his arrest appears to be motivated solely by his newspaper's reporting on events in the North. End comment.

¶7. In another troubling development Mr. Daouda Diallo, president of Niger's Conseil Superieur de la Communication (CSC), warned that the regulatory body would sanction any media which criticized its rulings or members. The warning took place during an October 17, 2007 meeting between the CSC president and members of the private media. In that same meeting Diallo decried "foreign entities" offering training conferences to Nigerian media, which instructed them they could "say whatever they want." [Comment: We believe

this was a thinly veiled criticism of a PAS Niamey-sponsored media training on "The Role of Media in a Democracy" offered in July 2007 with ARS Paris-speaker Eduardo Cue. End comment.]

[18](#). Comment: The GON arrests of several journalists over the course of the past year and the most recent actions by the CSC president, coupled with his past public and private statements (Ref c), auger an ever-widening disconnect between the GON's statements and actions with regard to support for freedom of the press.

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